

Appl. No. 09/976,213

**REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

In the Office Action, claims 23 and 24 were allowed. An objection was made to claim 51 as being dependent upon a rejected based claim, but was indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The preceding listing of claims maintains allowed claims 23 and 24. Allowable claim 51 has been effectively rewritten in independent form by amending its base claim 45 to include all of the limitations of claim 51 and the intervening claim 50. Therefore, the amended independent claim 45 corresponds to an independent version of claim 51 which includes all of the limitations of the base claim 45 and the intervening claim 50 from which claim 51 depended. Claim 45 is therefore believed to be allowable.

A further minor amendment was made to claim 45 to correct a double occurrence of the phrase "each of the".

Since the limitations of claims 50 and 51 have now been incorporated into claim 45, these claims have been cancelled.

Claims 48, 49, 52 and 53 have been maintained in the application, but now depend from amended allowable claim 45. These dependent claims are also believed to be allowable since they now depend from an allowable base claim.

Claim 54 was rejected in the Office Action and has been cancelled.

It should be noted that the claim amendments reflected in the preceding listing of claims have been made solely to advance the examination of this application. The Applicants in no way concede that the claim rejections made in the Office Action were valid.

The Applicants have made a diligent effort to place the application into allowable form by maintaining in the application claims to subject matter that has been indicated by the Examiner to be allowable. As noted above, claims 23 and 24 were allowed in the Office Action, and independent claim 45 has been amended to incorporate all of the limitations of claim 51,

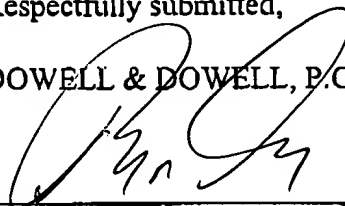
Appl. No. 09/976,213

which page 4 of the Office Action indicates would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. All of the other claims remaining in the preceding listing of claims depend from claim 45 and are also allowable.

Allowance of the application is therefore respectfully requested. In the event that the Examiner believes that any further issues are to be resolved before the application is allowed, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact the undersigned by telephone so as to expediently resolve such issues so that the application may proceed to allowance.

Respectfully submitted,


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